In Search of the Promised Land – Sunday May 30, 2021

12 Now the LORD had said to Abram: "Get out of your country,
From your family and from your father's house, to a land that I will
show you. [2] I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make
your name great; and you shall be a blessing. [3] I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse
him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

[4] So Abram departed as the LORD had spoken to him, and Lot went with him. And Abram was
seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. [5] Then Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot
his brother's son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people whom they
had acquired in Haran, and they departed to go to the land of Canaan. So, they came to the land
of Canaan. [6] Abram passed through the land to the place of Shechem, as far as the terebinth
tree of Moreh. And the Canaanites were then in the land.

[7] Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your descendants I will give this land." And
there he built an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him. [8] And he moved from there to the
mountain east of Bethel, and he pitched his tent with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east;
there he built an altar to the LORD and called on the name of the LORD. [9] So Abram journeyed,
going on still toward the South.

The real message of today is that God keeps His promises. We are going to see how God promised Abraham a land for him and his descendants. God keeps His promises. Today we'll look at where the land is and what it consists of. In addition, we'll look at Abraham and his calling, and we'll look at the other promises that were made to him in this passage. God is a God who keeps promises. Every believer can be assured of that as well. What God promises turnes to testimonies, and what the world promises always turns to tragedy.

Let's look at a few maps to find out where exactly we are talking about.

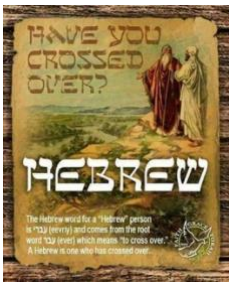
The map on the left is of course a map of the world. You can see the United States and if you follow over and look at the red portion, that is the Mediterranean Sea. To the far right hand side of that is the tiny area of Israel. The map on the right above shows an area that someone on the internet delineates at the "Promised Land".

So, how do we know that the Promised Land was given to the Jews forever? We know this because of the promises of God we just read in the Genesis 12 passage above. We also can

look In Deuteronomy 4:40, in which the Lord gave the Israelites this command: *"Keep his decrees and commands, which I am giving you today, so that it may go well with you and your children after you and that you may live long in the land the Lord your God gives you for all time."* Does this mean God gave Israel the Promised Land in perpetuity? Yes. The reason it does is because "for all time" means for all time. It means forever.

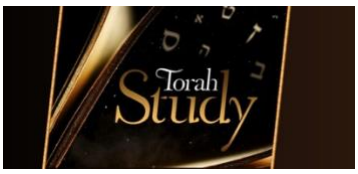
This passage contains a conditional offer also not as to ownership but as to possession. Israel would own the land forever, but they would possess the Promised Land as they kept God's "decrees and commands." The Israelites had to obey God's statutes in order to remain in the land. History reveals that the Israelites often disobeyed, resulting in temporary times of exile from their land. However, the end of this passage notes that God is giving Israel the Promised Land "for all time." The Hebrew phrase translated "for all time" is a general statement, likely in reference to God's original promise of a land to Abraham in Genesis 12.[1]

This people that descended from Abraham are also called "Hebrews". It is an interesting word with differing thoughts as to its origin. I believe it means something like the "crosser-overs". That is such an interesting thought because it denotes that there is movement from one place to another. There is a leaving behind of the old and reaching out for the new.



So, what is a Hebrew – "Ivrit" is the word for Hebrew in the Hebrew language. As I said above, it means "cross over – from the "other side". The Hebrews are peoples descended from Abraham. The origin of the word *Hebrew* is thought to come from the proper name "Eber," listed in Genesis 10:24 as the great-grandson of Shem and an ancestor of Abraham. Another etymology traces the original root word back to the phrase "from the other side"—in that case, *Hebrew* would be a word designating an "immigrant," which Abraham certainly was (Genesis 12:1, 4–5).[2]

When I think of this whole idea of "crossing over", it prompts me to ask you, "Have you crossed over?" As I wrote this, I thought of the words of Jesus when He said, *"Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life." (John 5:24 NIV).* Jesus is clearly telling us that to be saved we must cross over from death unto life, and we do that by receiving salvation from believing in His death, burial, and resurrection that was done in our behalf. We learn about these things in the earliest books of the Bible.



Wednesday night we reviewed the names of the first five books of the Bible. These are called the "Torah". This is mistranslated as "The Law" and the Law is misunderstood to be the Ten Commandments. The Torah is not the Ten Commandments. It includes the Ten Commandments, but it includes so much more. What we read in these first five books is God's first instructions to man. There are many narratives, but they are here for a purpose. They are here to "instruct" us in how to live and

[1] https://www.gotquestions.org/Israel-promised-land.html
[2] https://www.gotquestions.org/who-Hebrews.html

how not to live. They are here to instruct us and inform us of God's ultimate plan of redemption for all of the world. We find SO MUCH basic Bible doctrine in the Torah. These words have been given Greek names later in history, but I feel like the Hebrew names are more revealing of the purposes of God in communicating these instructions through human authors who were inspired by the Holy Spirit. Here is a look at those books.

ΓΕΝΕΣΙΣ (Genesis) The Greek word for "creation" is the name given to the first book of the Hebrew Bible, whose first word is בראשית**, (*bereshit*), meaning "In the beginning…".** Many people argue about the when and the how of creation, but I have always told you all that the important thing is the WHO of creation. In the beginning GOD created the heaven and the earth. Our Greek (western) minds want to know the when and the how, but that is not important to God. The WHO is what is important. The how is that God spoke the universe into being. And Jesus was right there in the beginning. The Book of John makes this perfectly clear because "in the beginning was the WORD and the WORD was with GOD and the WORD was GOD". (John 1). So the story progressed and eventually God's chosen people found themselves not in the Promised Land but in slavery. They needed a "way out".

ΕΞΟΔΟΣ (Exodus) The Book of Exodus, means the "way out" in Greek. It is an account of the way out of Egypt. In Hebrew, the book is called **שמות, *shemot*, which simply means "names"**. The first words of the book declare, "Now these are the <u>names</u> of the children of Israel who came to Egypt…". This reminds me of so many things. It reminds me of how I am called by a name "Christian" like those first believers in Antioch. It reminds me that God has a special name just for me. (Revelation 2:17). As the Lord took His people out of Egypt, He gave them a path to holiness through worship in the tabernacle.

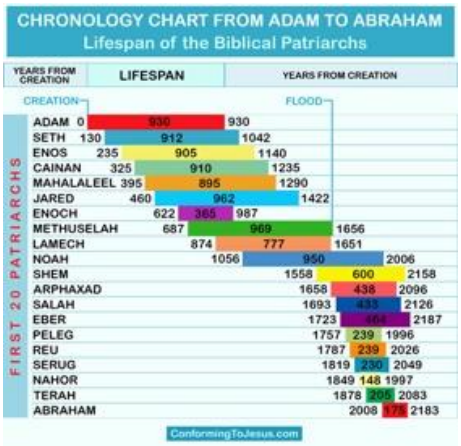
ΛΕΥΙΤΙΚΟΝ (Leviticus) Has to do with the duties of the <u>Levites</u>, members of the tribe of Levi who administered the Temple rituals. **In Hebrew, the book is called ויקרא, *vayyiqra,* "And (the Lord) <u>called</u> to Moses…".** You know it's so much more interesting to think of the fact that God calls you and me as well. We are called to holiness. We are called to Christ-likeness. We are called to be imitators of God. As we are called to this, we often encounter hardship and trials.

ΑΡΙΘΜΟΙ (Numbers) The Greek word for number is ΑΡΙΘΜΟΣ, ΑΡΙΘΜΟΙ, in the plural. In **Hebrew, it is simply called במדבר, *Bemidbar*, "In the Desert".** I think everyone of us has found ourselves "in the desert" as we've progressed along our journey in the faith. We do sometimes wander in the desert, but we always must remember that God is with us in that desert. The think that gets us through the desert is God's word. It informs us of the promises of God and the character of God. And it's good to look at it a second time, a third time, and many more times.

ΔΕΥΤΕΡΟΝΟΜΙΟΝ (Deuteronomy) (also Mishneh Torah – repeated instruction) ΔΕΥΤΕΡΟΣ = SECOND, ΝΟΜΟΣ = LAW. The second law? In the LXX, the Hebrew word *Torah* is translated by the Greek *nomos*, which has the sense of custom or tradition, rather than law. However, this was translated into Latin as *lex,* = law, which is perhaps a contribution to the mistaken notion that Torah = law and legalism. Deuteronomy is known in Hebrew as, דברים , *Devarim*, from the opening phrase *Eleh ha-devarim*, "These are the <u>words</u> which Moses spoke to all Israel on the

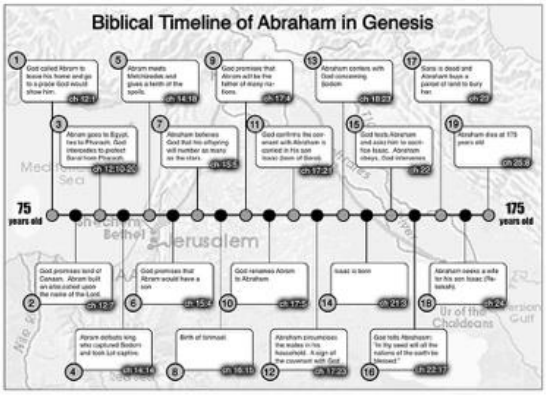
other side of the Jordan". It is the *devarim* of God (His words) that must become precious to us. His word is a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path.

Let's now take a look at when Abraham existed. Abraham lived as long before Jesus' time on earth as we have lived after Jesus' time on earth. Abraham lived about 4,000 years ago. Take a look at the timeline below.



Timeline/Historical Review

Abraham lived around 2000 BC.
"Abram departed as the Lord had spoken to him." (Genesis 12:4)
He left Ur of the Chaldees and went south.
God made a covenant with him. And only God performed.



As Abram grew older, he and Sarai decided to "help God out" with the promised heir. So, Abram when into Sarai's handmaid and had a son Ishmael. Finally, when Abram was 100 and Sarah was about 90 they had Isaac (the promised heir from Sarai). We do that same sort of nonsense. We might have an understanding of things that God will bring to pass, and we mess up when we try to "help God out". The good news is that He forgives us again, and again, and again. And the things that we think, say, or do that are contrary to His will can be used for a postive purpose in our lives.

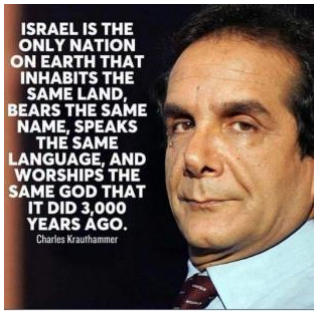
In time Isaac was born. He had two sons: Esau and Jacob Jacob had 12 sons. These are the sons from which each of the twelve tribes of Israel came. One of the sons of Jacob whom God renamed as Israel was Joseph. We will study that he ended up being sold into slavery in Egypt but he was elevated by God and eventually became what would be the "prime minister" of sorts of the Land. It is a long tale that we will enjoy reviewing to see how God worked things out to bring his people as promised to a Promised Land.

The great them of today is that God's promises are enduring. He made unilateral promises to Abraham that had nothing to do with Abraham's performance. God called Abraham to be the father of the nation of Israel not because of anything that Abraham had done. God called him

because of grace. God heaped undeserved favor on Abraham because that is what God wanted to do.

However, the response of Abraham to that grace is that he believed what God had said. And God counted that belief of Abraham as righteousness. That was the response that God desired from Abraham. We too are made promised by God in a New Covenant. They don't have anything to do with physical land in a physical place, but they are promises made to each of us as "joint heirs"with Jesus when we accept His finished work on the cross for each of us.

We can learn much from the Torah. One thing we learn this morning is that God is faithful and what He promises, He will perform. I once heard a pastor say, "Watch the Jews and you'll have an understanding of the foreign policy of Almighty God." There is much truth to that. Just seeing the birth of Israel as a nation and their reestablishment in the Promised Land speaks volumes. Just think in human terms how impossible the following meme is without the intervention of God.



A rabbi once told me, "If you don't believe in miracles you must go to the State of Israel because it is a miracle."

Brothers and sisters, if God can faithfully perform what He promised to a group many of which are hostile to God and the things of God, just think what He will do in the lives of His faithful who love Him and want to serve Him.

The beauty of it all is that His gift to mankind is a free gift ready to be received by any who will receive it. And part of the inheritance which we receive is the Holy Spirit living within us. Scripture is very clear that when God made those promises to Abraham they were unilateral. That means they were one-sided. Abraham did NOTHING to deserve them. He did not perform. He did ONE THING. God appeared to Abraham and said:

"Do not fear, Abram, I am a shield to you;Your reward shall be very great."[2] But Abram said, "Lord GOD, what will You give me, since I am childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" [3] Abram also said, Since You have given me no son, one who has been born in my house is my heir." [4] Then behold, the word of the LORD came to him, saying, "This man will not be your heir; but one who will come from your own body shall be your heir." [5] And He took him outside and said, "Now look toward the heavens and count the stars, if you are able to count them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be." [6] Then he believed in the LORD; and He credited it to him as righteousness. (Genesis 15 NASB)

Let us go and do likewise. Let us pray.

Union Grove is one of the oldest Baptist communities of faith in the State of Texas dating back to 1844. Pastor Faber McMullen may be reached by email at uniongrove362@gmail.com or by snail mail at: 15301 FM 362, Navasota, Texas 77868. Tel: 936-825-1227 (Edited and proofed by

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